

What is claimed is:

Suba! 1 1. A method of controlling the intensity of a backlight  
2 included in a display device which also includes a screen  
3 and a first photo-sensor, the method comprising the steps  
4 of:

5 using said photo-sensor to detect the intensity  
6 of light incident on a first surface of the display  
7 device; and

8 adjusting the amount of power supplied to the  
9 backlight as a function of the detected light intensity.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 periodically repeating the step of adjusting the  
4 amount of power.

1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of  
2 periodically repeating the step of adjusting the amount  
3 of power is performed automatically by the display device  
4 without user intervention.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the screen is a  
2 transmissive liquid crystal display screen.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 receiving a brightness setting signal  
4 indicative of a user selected brightness level; and

5 wherein the step of adjusting the amount of  
6 power supplied to the backlight is also performed as a  
7 function of the received brightness setting signal.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the first photo  
2 sensor is a front photo sensor, wherein the first surface  
3 is a front viewing surface of the display device; and  
4 wherein the display device further includes a rear  
5 photo-sensor, the method further comprising the steps of:

6 using the second photo-sensor to detect the  
7 intensity of light incident on a rear portion of the  
8 display device; and

9 wherein the step of adjusting the amount of  
10 power supplied to the backlight is also performed as a  
11 function of the detected intensity of light incident on  
12 the rear portion of the display device.

1 7. The method of claim 5, wherein the display screen is  
2 a transmissive display panel, the display device further  
3 including a second photo-sensor mounted between the  
4 backlight and a rear surface of the display panel, the  
5 method further comprising the step of:

6 using the second photo-sensor to determine the  
7 intensity of light incident on the rear surface of the  
8 display panel; and

9 wherein the step of adjusting the amount of  
10 power supplied to the backlight is also performed as a  
11 function of the detected intensity of light incident on  
12 the rear surface of the display panel.

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1 8. A method of controlling the intensity of a backlight  
2 included in a display device which also includes a screen  
3 and a rear photo-sensor, the method comprising the steps  
4 of:

5 using the rear photo-sensor to detect the  
6 intensity of light incident on a rear portion of the  
7 display device; and

8 adjusting the amount of power supplied to the  
9 backlight as a function of the detected light intensity.

1 9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 periodically repeating the step of adjusting the  
4 amount of power.

1 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step  
2 of:

3 receiving a brightness setting signal  
4 indicative of a user selected brightness level; and

5 wherein the step of adjusting the amount of  
6 power supplied to the backlight is also performed as a  
7 function of the received brightness setting signal.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein multiple user  
2 selectable brightness settings are supported, one of the  
3 brightness settings requiring less power than the other  
4 supported brightness settings.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of  
2 periodically repeating the step of adjusting the amount

of power is performed automatically by the display device  
without user intervention.

13. A display device, comprising:

a display panel;

a backlight positioned behind the display  
panel;

a first photo-sensor for determining the  
intensity of light impinging on a first portion of the  
display panel; and

a backlight intensity control circuit for  
controlling the intensity of the backlight as a function  
of the determined intensity of light impinging on the  
first portion of the display panel.

14. The display device of claim 13, wherein the first  
portion of the display panel is a front portion; and  
wherein the display panel includes a display screen and a  
housing for mounting the display screen.

15. The display device of claim 14, wherein the display  
screen includes a liquid crystal cell.

16. The display device of claim 15, wherein the first  
photo-sensor is mounted on a front portion of the  
housing.

17. The display device of claim 14, further comprising:  
a user accessible brightness control coupled to  
the backlight intensity control circuit.

1 18. The display device of claim 14, further comprising:  
2 a second photo-sensor, coupled to the backlight  
3 intensity control circuit, for determining the intensity  
4 of light impinging on a second portion of the display  
5 panel.

1 19. The display device of claim 18, wherein the second  
2 portion of the display panel is a rear portion and  
3 wherein the rear photo-sensor is mounted on a rear  
4 portion of the housing.

5  
6 20. The display device of claim 13, wherein the  
7 intensity control module includes means for automatically  
8 adjusting, on a periodic basis, backlight intensity.

9  
10 21. A display device, comprising:  
11 a display panel;  
a backlight positioned behind the display  
panel;  
a rear photo-sensor for determining the  
intensity of light impinging on a rear portion of the  
display panel; and  
a backlight intensity control circuit for  
controlling the intensity of the backlight as a function  
of the determined intensity of light impinging on the  
rear portion of the display panel.

1 22. The display device of claim 21, wherein the  
2 intensity control module includes means for automatically  
3 adjusting, on a periodic basis, backlight intensity.

1 23. A portable computer device, comprising:

2 a display panel;

3 a backlight positioned behind the display  
4 panel;

5 a front photo-sensor for determining the  
6 intensity of light impinging on a front portion of the  
7 display panel;

8 a backlight intensity control circuit for  
9 controlling the intensity of the backlight as a function  
10 of the determined intensity of light impinging on the  
11 front portion of the display panel; and

12 a base portion, including a keyboard and a  
13 central processing unit, connected to the display panel.

1 24. The portable computer device of claim 23, wherein  
2 the display panel includes a transmissive liquid crystal  
3 display screen and a housing, the computer device further  
4 comprising:

5 a hinge for connecting the display panel to the  
6 base portion.

1 25. The portable computer device of claim 24,

2 wherein the backlight intensity control  
3 circuit is included in the base portion; and

4 wherein the backlight intensity control circuit  
5 includes means for automatically adjusting, on a periodic  
6 basis, backlight intensity.

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